

Centers for Regional Excellence Program – Round II, 2008

Following are brief descriptions of the twenty-five proposals submitted for Round II:

Delivering a Community Media Channel to a Tri-County Area

This proposal engages local communities to collaboratively deliver efficient and cost-effective public access cable television programming. Their short-term vision is to designate one local community's cable channel as the local playback operator of the public access channel for their tri-county area. They propose to merge two local community cable infrastructures, allowing community media content to be broadcast from one location, using one playback operating system, and one staff member, thus allowing content on the channel to be seen by the region. The collaboration committee then intends to move forward toward their long-term vision of creating a regional community media center.

Regional Recreation Registration Project

Two adjoining townships, including representatives from Parks and Recreation Depts., area school boards, libraries, and local governments, propose joint programming for providing regional recreation services that would be available to anyone living in those areas. The group proposed to purchase and install software and free-standing kiosks for the recreation program to allow for on-line registration.

Corridor Economic Development Tool

An association for a main commercial corridor covering two counties and 11 municipalities proposes to create an economic development tool that would take the shape of a web-based mapping tool, enabling corridor property owners, developers, community leaders and other to determine where economic development programs and incentives are offered along the byway. Such incentives/programs available could be Tax Increment Financing districts, Downtown Development Authorities and Neighborhood Enterprise Zones, as well as county, state and federal programs and incentives. In addition, they indicate that their tool will serve as a marketing piece for each community with their information on their organization's website and on each municipal site. The applicant proposes to distribute printed materials to the participating communities and the development community in order to advertise the benefits of choosing the corridor for new business ventures.

Local Civic Center Project

A local area recreation authority, comprised of four rural municipalities and five organizations, wants to construct a multi-purpose civic center facility with an ice arena which would expand the economic and recreation impact on their region and be environmentally sustainable. CRE funds would be used to contract with a project director who would coordinate the recreation authority activities, development activities, fund development, public outreach/coordination.

Canoe/Kayak Launch and Handicap Fishing Pier on Trailway

A friends group of a local trailway organization submitted a proposal for construction of a canoe/kayak launch and handicap accessible fishing pier that would connect to their local trailway system. Three rural and economically depressed townships would benefit from this project. They see their trailway as a pedestrian and equestrian corridor through these townships and their small towns in need of business. They propose creating a commercial brochure showing all the recreational facilities and local business in the area. They also expressed a need for having organized activities on the trail and intend to hire a project leader to create year-round activities.

County Regional Land Use Initiative

For the past two years, a rural county's Intergovernmental Planning Committee has been collaborating on regional land use issues that affect its county, its major city, three townships and others. . The group proposes to use an innovative technique called crowdsourcing, combined with a unique website structure that is both informational and interactive, to increase citizen participation in local government to encourage best land use practices; build a more productive relationship between local governments and their constituents; shorten government response times on issues of regional importance; and reduce the burden of managing and conveying information to the public. The group proposes to use CRE funds toward

collaboration meetings, scenario simulation software, data gathering, providing data, disseminating land use information, website promotion to the public, purchase of a server, website development and updating, workshops and education on uses of the website to address land use issues, and project administration.

County Public Safety Forensic Team

Because of a lengthy backlog at MSP, all public safety departments in a rural county propose to fund one of their personnel to become certified as a computer forensic investigator. CRE funds are proposed to be used for the purchase of essential hardware and software so that the trained certified investigator can process computer and cell phones that are evidence in ongoing criminal investigations, thus resulting in a higher number of arrests and a higher conviction percentage.

Disaster Recovery Solution and Collaboration

A county's Division of Information Systems proposes that if other communities and entities in the tri-city area share and collaborate on a local disaster recovery system, the overall costs to deploy these necessary procedures to enhance the day-to-day operations of county government could be lowered. They propose to establish a tie from the county's fiber optic network to allow sharing of information and the opportunity to utilize each entity with the issues of disaster recovery and potential other applications.

Joint Community Recreation Program

A rural village and township propose to launch a joint recreational program to expand access to recreational parks and implement monthly community recreational activities. The recreation program would be designed to foster relationships with other community members, build partnership with community organizations, promote multi-generational interaction and provide additional recreational facilities that encourage use and active participation from residents.

Township and Public School Summer Camp Program

A township parks and recreation department and their local public schools transportation department propose enhancing and maintaining their summer camp program. The camp has been in existence for over 20 years. They see the need for pre/post child care at the camp, meeting the needs of working parents and possibly decreasing some of the need for bus transportation; grant monies would also fund teachers for tutoring during camp hours. The applicant further states that the camp would benefit through collaboration with other partnerships such as the township police and fire departments and the township environmental department.

Promotion of a Healthy Community Initiative

A collaboration of a multitude of rural/suburban citizens, non-profit organizations, business stakeholders and governmental officials of cities, townships, and a county have created an outline for a "healthy community initiative". CRE funding would support the expansion of activities to currently unserved areas by expanding newsletter distribution, supporting outreach, and new communication efforts

"Breezeway" Collaboration Project

Three local governments in a region of small rural communities have proposed a collaborative marketing project for one of their major local roadways that is often overlooked by tourists. They have created and agreed upon a logo for the project. They propose signage along the route and are also planning on developing marketing materials, such as web site, a promotional campaign including print and other media, promotional activities in conjunction with local festivals and events, and possible further extension of the route to other communities along the road.

Wireless Service

A partnership of local governments in a county, local education service area, regional planning group and local area chamber of commerce has proposed a wireless internet service initiative which they feel would make their entire county more competitive and ensure that internet access would be made possible in parts of the county that may not have been served otherwise. The initiative would enable county residents and businesses to benefit from free, high quality, faster and more reliable internet access, preparing them for jobs and access to online educational opportunities.

Promotion of Local Maritime Experience

A coalition of two rural port cities and one county addresses a collaborative marketing project among key maritime-related, cultural tourism attractions. There has been no previous effort to collaboratively market maritime attractions, which are among the most attractive features of this area to visitors. Proposed strategic work would focus on creating an awareness of the identity and purpose of their local Maritime Experience among all potential participants. With the first year of the project devoted to defining the “experience” and identifying participants, the second year will focus on creating a tangible marketing asset that will affect results (logo, signage, printed materials, advertising).

Tri-Community Heritage Center

One township and two cities want to restore, preserve, and move a historic home in their area. The home would then be used as an educational, way finding center that would adjoin a portion of their local rail-trail, which is part of a state-wide regional trail system. The new permanent location of the home would be renamed the “Tri-Community Heritage Center” and be relocated across from one of the city’s local historic district. The center would provide residents of the three communities an opportunity for historical and educational interpretation of the area.

High-Speed Internet for Rural Communities

A grass-roots nonprofit corporation in a rural community submitted a proposal to install hardware for high-speed internet access in three townships currently without service. A study found that private companies have not been able to feasibly establish high speed internet in the area due to high capital outlay and low returns on service fees (low population). Therefore, the group is applying for CRE funds to establish Wi-Fi pods of higher density areas through the use of installation hardware.

Joint Marketing Plan Including Highway and Way finding Signage

Three small-town communities within a county intend to collaborate in a marketing plan that would utilize their limited financial resources to draw tourists and residents from resort areas surrounding their communities and promote the recreational and commercial opportunities available in that area of the county. The group proposes that once they have garnered community input and formulated their ‘brand development’ for the area as a whole and for each individual community, their marketing plan would focus on selling the communities’ brand and assets throughout the Midwest marketplace.

Department of Public Works/Services Collaborative

A community conference organization submitted a proposal for their Department of Public Works/Services Collaborative, an initiative involving 15 of their member communities. The Collaborative would focus on group bids and purchases of commodities and services needed by their communities, and information sharing on other available resources and issues relating to the provision of public works/services.

Electronic Entertainment and Gaming Expo

This project focuses on a community collaborative, which includes a local university, and their plan to create an event that would attract and retain intellectual and creative talent of the “new” economy – innovative capacity and knowledge-based jobs. Specifically they are focusing on the reportedly fast-growing video game design and software publishing industry. They are proposing a three-day exposition in October, 2009, to offer vendors, residents, job seekers, academics, and enthusiasts an opportunity to display and demonstrate electronic entertainment and video games technology in their region of Michigan.

Regional Airport Community Development Project

A regional collaboration that engages multiple communities (two counties, four cities, three townships), the local county airport authority and other stakeholders in a partnership to develop the areas encompassing two airports. The local governments have agreed to draft and adopt an intergovernmental agreement to create their Development Corporation to attract business to the regions, create jobs, to master plan the region, and to work cooperatively, not competitively, to build a better future for the region and the State. CRE funds would be utilized for development of the Development Corporation’s website and intranet portal to manage communication between the board and stakeholders, as well as create an e-newsletter to inform the public of developments within the project area.

Corridor Gateway Business Collaborative

This proposal was submitted by a collaborative that serves as an initiative to revitalize a community anchored by a commercial corridor through targeted activities related to economic development, physical revitalization, and social equity. It is supported by three cities, a county, and non-profit and grass-roots organizations within the area. They are requesting CRE funds to enable their collaborative to hire an individual on a part-time basis to devote full attention to creation of a business association for the corridor. This person would enhance communication, recruit association members and officers, and coordinate member-driven activities to increase customers and new businesses to the corridor.

A Plan for the Catalyst of Economic Change

A county-based Cultural and Economic Development Task Force believes that they can create a plan that can shift their depressed economic base from industrial to a mix of industrial, tourism and new commercial business development by promoting their distinct cultural assets through a culturally-based economic development/marketing plan. They are requesting CRE funds to provide funding to begin their cultural assessment research and be a catalyst for a new start for citizens and businesses of the county. The comprehensive historical/cultural research would be stored in a database; finished findings of the cultural assessment would be showcased in an online marketplace, a privately-owned website partnered with the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries for cultural promotion.

Municipal Benefits/Purchasing Cooperative

Two large municipal conferences propose to form an employer cooperative (Municipal Benefits/Purchasing Cooperative) to generate significant savings for their municipalities so they can continue to deliver quality public services. The applicant states that they can better contain costs by creating a large group of employees, share risk, create greater purchasing power and access in the insurance marketplace, reduce risk to individual corporate members, gain better pricing and realize cost savings on a variety of benefits through volume purchasing, and create a forum for exchange of information.

Highway Corridor Development Team

A Corridor Development Team, representing a portion of a Michigan Interstate Freeway, consists of two cities and two townships that have created a development plan for their portion of the corridor. They have an organized, public/private approach to economic development with an inter-local agreement to share costs and revenues. Their proposed project would integrate their future land use plan with their environmental study and with other master plans of the four communities.

Broadband Cooperative

Twelve rural counties and one city indicate a need for CRE funds to provide technical support for the start-up of their proposed Broadband Cooperative. The cooperative's partners include various branches of government, educational, private and non-profit sectors to work in a collaborative manner to improve public and private access to high-speed internet, an essential component of economic and community development success. They state that implementation of the service would increase organizational and individual efficiency and the cooperative partners would have better buying power with contractors, leading to reduced costs to the public and private sectors.